

CLAIMANTS UNITE



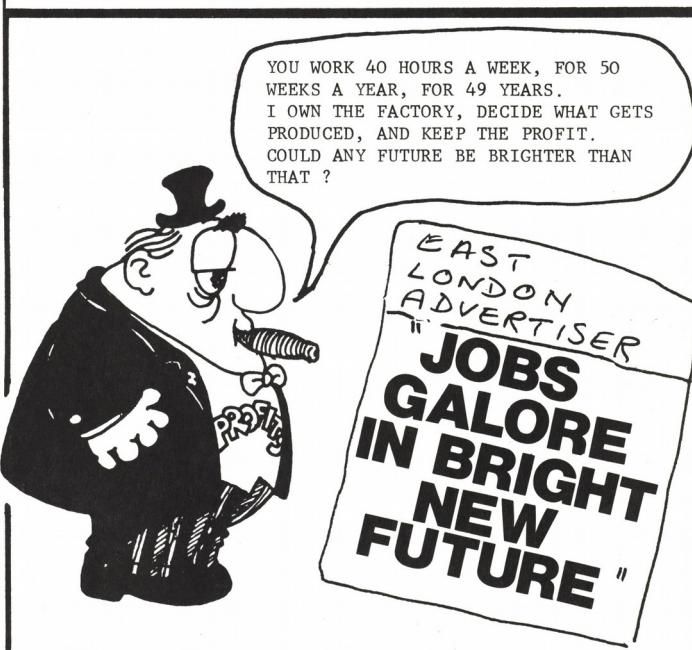
CLAIMANTS NEWSPAPER NUMBER 11
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF CLAIMANTS UNIONS

SBC REVEALS ALL

The Supplementary Benefits Commission offers a useful piece of information in their recent Annual Report*. The total amount paid out in Supplementary Benefit each year equals the total amount of tax relief given back to people with mortgages and insurance premiums. In other words, by axeing these tax concessions, Supplementary Benefit could be doubled immediately.

PROPOSED CHANGES

This first ever report of the SBC has led to the setting up of a committee to review the workings of the Supplementary Benefits scheme, and to discuss proposals for change. They propose 1) abolishing lump sum grants and weekly additions. 2) simplifying the SS system^{(Even Donnison has to admit that the SS is so complicated that even the staff can't understand it..let alone us poor claimants.} 3) offloading their problems onto other agencies eg scrapping Unemployment Review Officers not paying additions for rent and excluding students from claiming. 4) changing the appeal tribunal system. 5) reducing staff.



The number of claimants has trebled since 1948, 39% of claimants get weekly additions and 34% get lump sum grants. The SS is begining to crack under this weight. It is important that we expose any attempt by the SBC to change the system which will harm claimants. We must pose our own socialist alternatives.

*SBC Annual Report £1.85 from HMSO

CONFERENCE REPORT

The last Claimants Union Conference in West London agreed on the following resolutions:

THE ROLE OF THE CLAIMANTS UNION MOVEMENT

- (1) To ensure that all claimants receive all benefits to which they are entitled under the present social security system.
- (2) To create a class consciousness amongst claimants and to make claimants aware of the role of the social security system within capitalism.
- (3) To inform and educate those members of the working class in employment (particularly those in trade unions and community politics) of the true nature of claiming.
- (4) To join with other sections of the working class in overthrowing capitalism and bringing about a socialist society in which all necessities are provided free and which is managed and controlled directly by the people.

THE NEXT NATIONAL CONFERENCE IS BEING HELD IN BRISTOL IN JANUARY. For more details write to 46 Richmond Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6.

The next national coordinating meeting is being held in Birmingham on 6th of November. (021-472-3676)

A NATIONAL MINIMUM INCOME

For every person in or out of employment.

- a) available as of right to every person.
- b) linked to a working class cost of living index.

- c) that the tax threshold be raised above the level of this minimum income.
- d) that child benefits be payable in addition to this to the person responsible for the day to day care of the child.

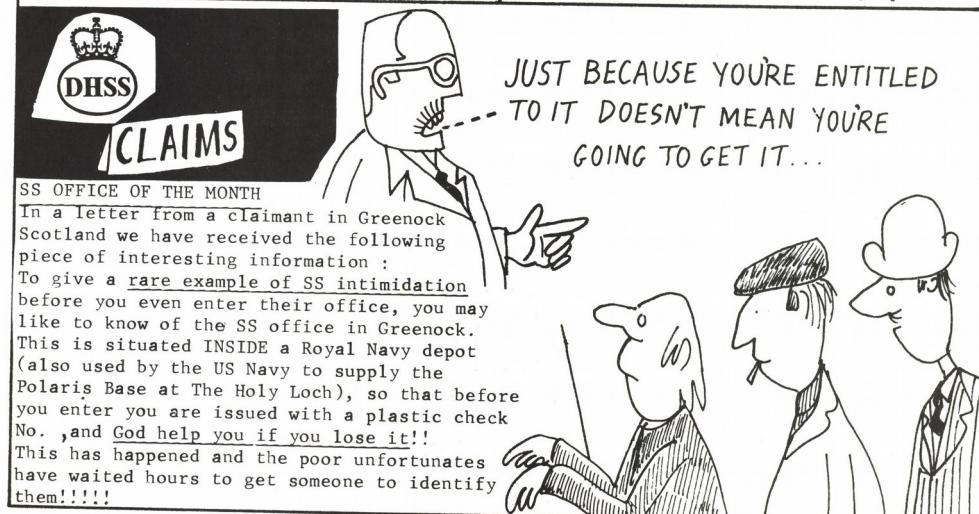
The social 'wage' should be increased to include free prescriptions, dental and optical care for all, free school meals and milk for all children, free nurseries, free abortion on demand, free transport etc

IRELAND

The Claimants Union Representative on the Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland (north and south) gave a report of the visit at the conference. If you would like a speaker at your meeting, or a copy of this report write to:-

Ian Macpherson, East Ham CU,
79/81 Barking Road, London E6.

A resolution was passed on Ireland:
" This conference notes that the British Army is not in Northern Ireland to keep the peace but rather to defend British colonial interests. This conference supports activities which bring this fact to the attention of the British people."



STATEMENT BY CLAIMANT FOR SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT

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1 CLAIMANT'S SURNAME (BLOCK LETTERS)	FOR OFFICE USE	State:
Mr Mrs Miss	No Cross Ref	Unrebated rent (excluding arrears) Water Gas Electricity Council Tax Council Tax rebate* Council Tax allowance* Council Tax sheltered accommodation allowance* Decision awaited on application reported
Other names.....	number	
2 ADDRESS WHERE CLAIMANT IS LIVING	Place of payment	
<p>On the cover of the last edition of 'Claimants Unite' we mentioned that the CPSA(the SS clerks union) was preparing to strike on November 17th. Since then their national executive has had second thoughts and it looks like the strike will be postponed and at best will be unofficially carried out by various local branches. At the last Claimants Union Conference this was discussed and the following resolution was passed:</p> <p>" This conference welcomes the industrial action of CPSA members over reduced staffing at local SS offices. We support, with reservations, proposals for overtime bans, work-to-rules and oneday stoppage. Claimants and CPSA members are both victims of government expenditure cuts and we have a common interest to defend ourselves against reductions in our own living standards. We hope CPSA members will feel encouraged to discuss their action with local Claimants Unions with a view to possible joint action and to ensure that industrial action causes the minimum inconvenience to claimants and the maximum disruption to the SS."</p> <p>Since this various CUs have had informal meetings with CPSA members and in the London area the CUs are hoping to meet and discuss the strike with an ALL London CPSA meeting. However this policy has provoked other responses and we have received this response from Bristol CU:</p> <p>Bristol CU feel very strongly that certain vital points were not raised at the CU conference and largely on these points we have decided it is impossible to support the action. 1) The scale rates are due to go up on the actual day that the CPSA are having their day of action and we feel that the choice of this particular date is a deliberate attack on claimants. 2) The CPSA is also the largest (or one of the largest) unions amongst defence workers and yet in their programme of action there will be no work to rule or stoppage in this sector. 3) The CPSA decision to merely work to rule in DHSS must therefore be seen as a direct and deliberate plan. To pretend that this action is solely in opposition to the cuts is divisive and Claimants Unions should in no way support the CPSA in their one day stoppage on the 17th November.</p>		
<p>The official role of the Unemployment Review Officer is to help Claimants find work. The word should be force. The URO threatens and bullies Claimants especially the single & unskilled into taking any work at any pay.</p> <p>" I'm single and have been an unemployed building labourer for over a year: recently I was summoned to the Bolton DHSS by the URO. Though I explained to him that building work was hard to come by (at least 80,000 building workers are on the dole at present) he told me that he'd give me a month to find a job, any job or else. He then explained what would happen if I didn't. Either I would have my benefit suspended indefinitely; be sent to a re-establishment centre for 13 weeks (to make concrete slabs at £3 a week), or be prosecuted by the DHSS for failure to maintain myself (which could mean 3-6 months in the nick). Most people would be intimidated by it all. I was though most of it was bluff. No wonder that according to the DHSS's own survey 43% of those attending UR interviews last year stopped drawing benefit "shortly before or after the interview". Presumably most of the others had skills which allow them to refuse a job not of their own choosing - a right every claimant should have. Not that the URO often does what he threatens to do, at least I'm still waiting six weeks later. Prosecution is rare, they can't force you to go to the Re-establishment centre, and suspension of benefit can and should be fought by appealing and demanding full money until the appeal is heard. Don't be intimidated, the purpose of the URO is to recycle redundant labour back into more profitable and usually worse paid jobs.</p> <p>FIGHT BACK!!!!" RLB</p>		

UNEMPLOYMENT AND CAPITALISM...

As most people are only too aware, production in Britain is geared to profit. The people who own industry and run the factories expect us to contribute to their profits by working for half a century from the day we leave school.

But for all our hard labour, do we get a say in what we produce? LIKE HELL! Decisions are not based on our needs but on what makes a profit for them. If that means producing weapons to kill...so what? ...as long as it is profitable....



But as Marx pointed out more than 100 years ago, the insane logic of 'capitalist' production leads to a falling rate of profit and recurrent crises like the one we have at present.

Productivity in Britain has been rising at the same time as profit rates have been falling. In the engineering industry, for example, output has increased by 46% while jobs have been reduced by 16% (1964-73). New machinery has produced more goods and at the same time thrown large numbers of people onto the dole.

Capitalism can only prevent the rate of profit from falling by reducing wages, finding cheaper supplies of raw materials, or 'rationalizing' production through monopolies and mergers. As with the steel industry, rationalisation makes whole workforces redundant and forces thousands onto the dole.

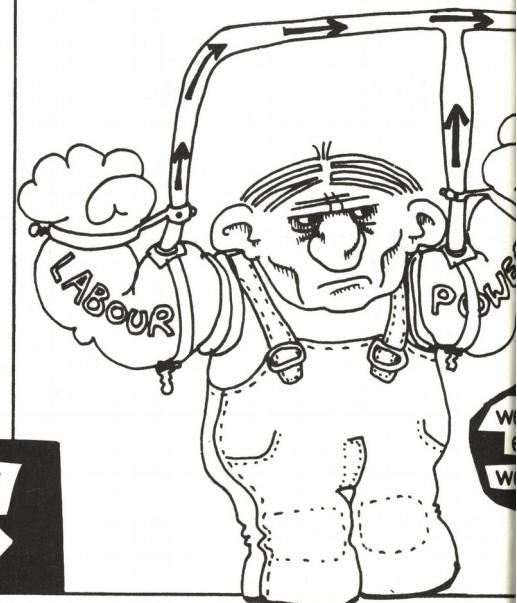
A LIVING INCOME
JOB OR NO JOB

FIGHT

Since the last War, various governments have matched the decrease of jobs in manufacturing industry by increasing the number of jobs in the public/service sector. Now the Labour Government is deliberately creating unemployment in order to increase the profits of the bosses which have been lowered by the falling rate of profit and the increasing cost of raw materials such as petrol. As a sop to the Left during this process of reducing working class standards of living, it has created a few phoney job creation schemes, and tarted up local job centres.

Whenever a Labour Government comes into power the left is thrown into disarray. The left of the Labour Party demand import controls and moan about cuts in public spending. Further left, trade unionists have been marching to the TUC or parliament asking for more jobs. No one has attacked the issue of alienation at work or the poverty out of it (and for millions in it also!) No one has questioned what unemployment is really all about... wage slavery and the work ethic.

WAGE SLAVERY AND ...



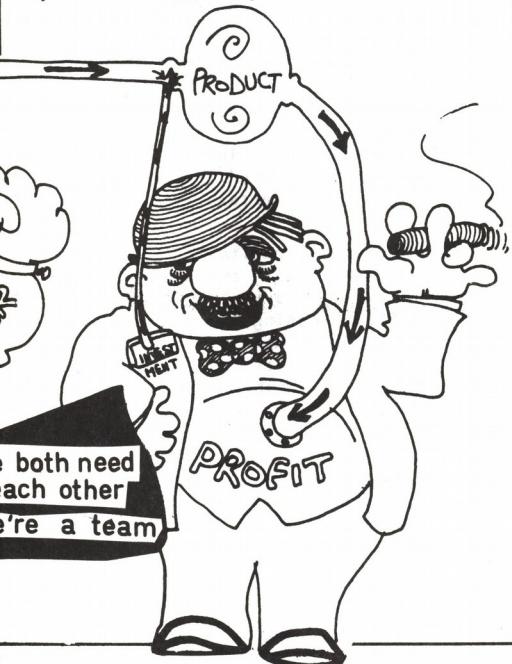
TO LIVE

THE WORK ETHIC ...

Marx describes the working class as " a class of labourers who live only as long as they work, and who work only as long as their labour increases capital."

Unemployment and Wage Slavery are two sides of the same coin. People in jobs have no power or control over their workplace or factory which may be dirty, overcrowded or noisy. People in jobs have little power over the nature of the work they do, and most employees function as appendages of machines... making their minds go blank until the weekend. Employees usually have no control over the products they make which may be socially useless or even positively harmful. Sabotage is one response to building cars one can't afford to buy, or aeroplanes one can't afford to travel in.

Hours of employment have not decreased over the last century. As the working week has shortened so people have been forced to work overtime. In the 1920s men spent 46 hours per week in employment. In the 1960s the average was 47 hours. Increased production does not lead to more leisure - only to hard work and poverty.



People seek and compete with each other for jobs. People put up with work which is alienating. People demand that the Labour Government create more jobs. People waste their lives clocking in and clocking out. WHY? People demand employment in order to obtain wages with which to pay the rent and electric, to buy food and clothing. But THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS OF A CLASSLESS SOCIETY FREE FROM EMPLOYMENT.

Being on the dole means poverty and insecurity; and employment offers some people an escape from this. But we should remember that poverty and insecurity also exists for millions of low paid workers who are even in trade unions like NUPE and NALGO. Many low paid workers are being faced with backdoor redundancies...being sacked for trivial reasons like arriving late or arguing with the foreman.



Is that well known picture from the '30s of a man in a cloth cap leaning dejectedly on a street corner depressed and dispirited because he hasn't got a job, or because he's been slaving away in a coal mine? Does he need a good dose of work to straighten his back...to make a 'man' of him?

Even with 1½ million 'signing on' the dole a person without a job is often referred to as a workshy, layabout scrounger. "Get yourself a job" is a term of abuse hurled at most Claimants - it is a feeling far more deeply entrenched in the working class than racial hatred. The capitalist press fosters both of these prejudices to divide the working class. The 'Left' speaks out against racism, but seems ambivalent about denouncing the work ethic + wage slavery.

There is no lack of work in society. Millions of women do a hard day's work bringing up kids or looking after relatives and neighbours. We must question the nature of work/employment. Do we really want to waste our lives in useless work and neglect work which is important but 'unprofitable'? Do we really want to make profits for the bosses? Do we want to hammer on the door for re-admittance to the capitalist treadmill of wage slavery?

FIGHT to LIVE

FIGHT TO LIVE DEMANDS

A LIVING INCOME JOB OR NO JOB.
Higher social security benefits now.
End wage restraint.

No deduction of family allowances from supplementary benefits.
End the cohabitation rule.
Benefits for all wageless married women and cohabitantes.

USEFUL WORK END WAGE SLAVERY.
No cuts in housing, health, education or public transport.

Free access to higher education.
No job creation scheme cons.
Employees right to save their jobs.
No to armed services recruitment campaigns.
Recognition of child care as useful work.
35 hour week with no loss of income.
No overtime.

NO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE UNEMPLOYED.
End the industrial misconduct rule.

No 6 week suspension of unemployment benefit.
No 40% reduction in supplementary benefit.
Long term rate to be paid to all claimants after six months.
Earnings disregard to be the same for all claimants.
Equal dole for married women.
Automatic B1 and A124.
Supplementary benefit appointments arranged at the dole.

CLAIMANTS UNION AFFILIATION TO TRADES COUNCILS. End trade union discrimination against claimants.

WHY THE RATE OF PROFIT IS FALLING

The profit a capitalist makes is the difference between the price he sells his goods for and the costs he incurs in getting these goods produced. There are 3 types of costs : raw materials, machinery, and wages.

Competition forces the capitalist to improve production usually through increased mechanisation. But raising productivity by increasing the amount of capital equipment per employee forces down the rate of profit :-

Cost of Materials & Machinery	Cost of Wages	Profit or Surplus	Rate of Profit
100	100	100	$\frac{100}{200} = 50\%$
200	100	100	$\frac{100}{300} = 33\%$
300	100	100	$\frac{100}{400} = 25\%$

IS WORK
GETTING YOU DOWN?



ETC. See Marx 'Capital' Volume 3 page 211.

INFORMATION

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SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT RATES

HOUSEHOLDERS	short term	long term
Couple	£20.65p	£24.85p
Single	£12.70p	£15.70p
NON-HOUSEHOLDERS		
over 18 years	£10.15p	£12.60p
16 - 17 years	£7.80p	

CHILDREN

13 - 15	£6.50p
11 - 12	£5.35p
5 - 10	£4.35p
under 5	£3.60p

PLUS A RENT ADDITION:
 1) rent and rates in full,
 2) mortgage interest plus an amount
 for insurance and repairs etc.
 3) £1.20 rent allowance if you are
 a non-householder

OR BOARD AND LODGING up to £18 a week
 and pocket money of £4.10p.

GET A NEW WRITTEN EXPLANATION OF
 HOW YOUR BENEFIT IS BEING WORKED
 OUT NOW ! (Form A124)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLAIMANTS UNION MOVEMENT CONTACT THE FOLLOWING
CLAIMANTS UNIONS WHICH ACT AS COORDINATORS FOR THEIR REGIONS. If you write
 please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope. The publications
 library keeps an up-to-date address list, and people can subscribe to CU
 publications by writing to this address.

SOUTH THAMES

Camberwell CU
 Union Place
 122 Vassall Road
 London SW9
 (01-735-6123)

CYMRU/WALES

Swansea CU
 79 Brokesby Road.
 Bon-y-maen
 Swansea
 West Glamorgan

SOUTH WEST

Bristol CU
 46 Richmond Road
 Montpelier
 Bristol 6
 (0272-422310)

WEST THAMES

West London CU
 510 Harrow Road
 London W10
 (01-969-7437)

SCOTLAND

Glasgow CU
 St Brides Centre
 19/25 Rosevale Street
 Glasgow G11

MIDLANDS

Selly Oak CU
 768 Bristol Road
 Birmingham 29
 (021-472-3676)

NORTH THAMES

East London CU
 Dame Colet House
 Ben Jonson Road
 London E1
 (01-790-3867)

NORTH

South Shields CU
 Peoples Place
 Derby Terrace
 South Shields
 (08943-65062)

PUBLICATIONS

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 44 Havelock Road
 Handsworth
 Birmingham 20

NORTH WEST

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 6 Cotswold Drive
 Horwich
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 and Belfast.

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CLAIMANTS PUBLICATIONS: Claimants Guidebook, Women and Social Security, Strikers, Unemployed Handbook, Anti-Fisher Report, Heating Leaflets, Posters, Stickers, Membership Cards, Claim-Appeal-Complaint Forms, back copies of the Newspaper.
SUBSCRIBE NOW! to 44 Havelock Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 20. (Price List available)
DONATIONS NEEDED to print new handbooks and future editions of 'CLAIMANTS UNITE'.

Bristow: Frank Dickens

28796 SECS GONE...
 28797 SECS GONE...
 28798 SECS GONE...
 28799...

IN ANOTHER SECOND
 I'LL HAVE REACHED 28,800 SECONDS
 AND MY WORKING DAY WILL BE OVER...

28800...
 THERE!
 I'VE FINISHED...

GET ON WITH
 YOUR WORK!!!

18801...
 28802...
 18803...
 28804...

USEFUL
 WORK...
 END
 WAGE
 SLAVERY

CLAIMANTS and TRADE UNIONISTS

The Trades Union Congress is actively supporting the bosses by reaching agreement on a policy of wage restraint which effectively reduces our living standards. It colludes with big business interests in "ensuring peaceful plants and profitable enterprises in a stable economy". The TUC has consistently opposed

Claimants Union representation on local trades councils. The former chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission, Lord Collison, was a reactionary trade union leader. There are two trade unionists on the SBC at present: Kenneth Griffin of the Electrical Trades Union, and Brenda Dean of SOGAT.

The majority of Claimants have never been in a trade union. The majority of the unemployed are semi-skilled or unskilled workers or school leavers.

The only time most Claimants come in contact with trade unionists is on opposite sides of the counter at local appeal tribunals, and at local SS offices where some counter clerks are in CPSA (Civil and Public Services Association).

Where do we go from here?

At the last Claimants Union Conference there was some discussion of the role of the Claimants Union. Though they have not attended any recent CU Conferences Glasgow CU have written in this contribution to the debate:

THE POLITICS OF THE CLAIMANTS UNION MAY BE SUMMARISED AS FOLLOWS:

UNITY of all types of "claimant".
UNITY of interest with all other sections of the working class.
INDEPENDANT action of claimants.
LINKING of community struggles, nationally, on a political basis.
LIBERATION of women, economically, financially and legally.
STRUGGLE against bureaucracy.
DEFENCE against intimidation, and OFFENSIVE day to day battle for more money, based on unconditional support for all claimants.
OFFENSIVE struggle for a true Welfare Society based on universal provision for universal needs.
TEACHING Industrial workers that the State is not "neutral".
AIDING STRIKES and breaking down the "barrier of the Factory Wall".
IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE against the false image of the "helpless poor".
ASSERTION of the role of claimants, and of all those not engaged in wage-work, and the importance of "welfare" issues inside the socialist movement, and in politics generally.
STRUGGLE against WAGE-SLAVERY.
REJECTION of "professionalism" and establishment "social work".
DE-MYSTIFICATION of the "complexities" of the State.
EXPOSING false ideas in Social Security, such as "means tests" and "insurance".
A BULWARK against fascist exploitation of the non-employed.
ORGANISING vast numbers of people missed out by the traditional labour movement.
STANDING UP to the right wing propoganda against the positive aspects of the Welfare State, unashamedly and unapologetically.
RAISING QUESTIONS which the Left tends to brush under the carpet, such as the uselessness of most of the "work" done by "workers".
BRINGING TOGETHER the real experiences of claimants and their struggles into a movement that is genuinely rooted in the battles of the working class, which are the source of ALL SOCIALIST POLITICS.

CLAIMANTS CHARTER

1. The right to an adequate income without means test for all people.
2. A socialist society in which all necessities are provided free and which is managed and controlled directly by the people.
3. No secrets and the right to full information.
4. No distinction between so-called 'deserving' and 'undeserving'.

THANKS

To all the people who wrote for this newspaper...we couldn't include all the articles, letters and cartoons. Thanks to..West London, Bolton, East London, Glasgow, Greenock, East Ham, Bristol, North London, Birmingham. We hope other Unions will have something to contribute to the next edition.

All letters, articles, cartoons and photos to Camberwell Claimants Union by 12th of November.